

Music and Social Action Yale University Course by Coursera

In May 2017 I entered the Coursera Yale University course Music and Social Action because of a personal need to find an answer to the question whether the carillonneur has an important role to play in society. The course brought me very good answers which I am glad to share in this article.

The carillon is a tower instrument usually located in the center of a city or at an University campus. Does the carillon also stand in the middle of society? Does the audience appreciate the carillon and do they feel the importance of this instrument to be regularly played?

Carillonneurs could involve their audience by organizing thematic concerts. This could for example lead to a concert with Turkish music. If there is a community of Turkish people in the city, organizing a carillon concert with Turkish music would be a relevant thing to do.

To involve young people, the carillonneur could contact elementary schools and invite them to visit the carillon.

The carillonneur could study about the events going on in the city or at the campus and play appropriate music during these events or festivals.

However, even when things like these are realized, the carillonneur has to ask himself whether the carillon is of fundamental importance or the carillon produces music which is heard by people but is not listened to?

To answer this question we could look at what American philosophers have to say on the subject. In the Yale University course Music and Social Action John Dewey (1859-1952) and Maxine Greene (1917-2014) gave information which could be applied to the question on the fundamental importance of the carillon.

A) Playing Turkish music for the Turkish community.

The carillonneur is not only an artist but a citizen at the same time. During the carillon concert he is literally sitting above the people but should stay among them and be one of them as a human being. It is the society he lives in which inspires him to shape his carillon concerts.

I agree with Maxine Greene who said: "a citizen is somebody who has regard for the integrity of other people and out of that regard, out of the feeling of kinship, a community or civil society may take shape. It is never finished. It depends upon a regard for other people's significance and potentiality."

B) Inviting Elementary Schools to visit the carillon.

A visit to the carillon includes climbing the tower, seeing the bells, the drum and the hour clock. The carillonneur will play music. The visitor could look at the market beneath him and try to see the house where he is living. Imagine what a great experience this must be for a child! Maxine Greene might say this experience would be 'an opening to imagination.'

Visiting the carillon would definitely be, as John Dewey would say, 'art as experience.' Imagination and creativity are keywords in the life of a child. The carillonneur needs to have imagination and creativity to bring music alive. Children could connect to the musician due to these equal intentions. In one of the videos of the Yale University course pianist Jonathan Biss (b. 1980) states that one of the main goals of a musician is to communicate the beauty of music. Schools visiting the bell tower is a nice opportunity to demonstrate the carillonneur's love for bells and music.

C) Playing appropriate music at events and festivals in town

The carillon should be part of daily life. While the carillonneur is playing, people on the market below the tower are talking, music comes from open doors of shops and cars are making noise. All together they make one big piece of music which could be called 'the music of the city.' John Dewey worried that art would be apart from the society we live in. He wrote: "when an art product once attains classical status, it somehow becomes isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life experience." In my opinion, a carillon concert program should not be a fixed set of classical pieces as if the listener is going to a

museum of sounds. The carillon should be a living organism. New works and improvisations are pointing towards the future. In improvisations the artist could imagine how music in the future would sound. This idea matches the remark of Dewey who said "art is the domain of the imagination." Besides playing unknown music it is important that the audience can relate to the music of the carillon, that they recognize tunes and feel comfortable. By playing appropriate music at festivals, for example chansons at a French music festival in town, this goal would be achieved.

The positive answers to the questions convince me the role of the carillon and carillonneur is important in modern society. Due to the always changing society it will be necessary to keep on thinking about the interaction between the carillon and Social Action in future.

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July 2017